

## **Note:**

The Comms Kit is a document created by the Assembly Team (MASS LBP) and developed in coordination with the Communications Departments of the City of Victoria and District of Saanich for their use in promoting the events and updates of the Citizens' Assembly to the broader public. Each Comms Kit includes a date on which it was considered approved by all parties and ready for use. Questions about the Comms Kits can be directed to the Assembly Team at [info@victoriasaanich.ca](mailto:info@victoriasaanich.ca)

# **Victoria–Saanich Citizens' Assembly (VSCA)**

## **Digital Communications Plan: Phase VI**

April 1, 2025

Attn:

**City of Victoria:** Colleen Mycroft, Sheldon Johnson

**District of Saanich:** Kelsie McLeod

### **Background**

Over the past decade, the City of Victoria and District of Saanich have considered whether they should amalgamate and become one municipality. During the 2018 General and Local School Board Elections, both municipalities asked a "Community Opinion Question" to gauge public support to establish a Citizens' Assembly to study the issue and reach consensus on a recommendation. The question asked voters whether they were in favour of establishing a "Citizens' Assembly to explore the costs, benefits and disadvantages" of amalgamation. Voters in both municipalities supported this proposal and now, after being delayed by the pandemic, the Citizens' Assembly is proceeding.

The Citizens' Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation is a deliberative process intended to allow regional residents to actively participate in developing and evaluating the case for amalgamating the City of Victoria and District of Saanich. Residents will consider the costs, benefits and disadvantages of an amalgamation of the municipalities. The Citizens' Assembly will be an impartial advisory body charged by both councils to provide detailed consensus recommendations concerning the proposed amalgamation.

Forty-eight (48) randomly selected area residents will serve on the Assembly, meeting over eight day-long sessions between September 2024 and April 2025. Members of the public will be invited to make submissions to the Assembly and attend special roundtable meetings. The Assembly will submit its final report to both councils in June 2025. The Assembly will work to represent all residents and exemplify high standards of transparency, accountability and robust civic participation.

### **Objectives of Phase VI**

- Announce the conclusion of the Citizens' Assembly process
- Promote the forthcoming final report of the Assembly (due in May 2025)
- Alert the public to the Assembly [website](#) for resources, further information

- Communicate above in concert with a Victoria-Saanich Citizens's Assembly media release (April 5, 2025)

## **Target Audiences**

- Victoria and Saanich residents

## **Strategy**

- Synchronize timing and use consistent messaging across Victoria and Saanich communication channels
- Direct all comments and questions re: Citizens' Assembly to MASS LBP

## **Special Considerations**

The decision to amalgamate has far-reaching consequences and many people have strong opinions and feelings about it on both sides of the issue. There is the possibility that social media posts related to the Citizens' Assembly and amalgamation could attract a significant number of negative comments and interactions. There are advantages and disadvantages to disabling the comments on social media posts to prevent this.

### **Pros**

- Prevents amplification of negative, inaccurate or inflammatory statements.
- Provides a safe space where users can get factual information.
- Reduces staff time to monitor, respond and moderate comments.

### **Cons**

- Risk to corporate reputation by appearing closed to dialogue or unwilling to hear from the public.
- Diverges from standard corporate practice.
- The act of disabling comments could overshadow the content and become the story.
- Without engagement to boost the post via the algorithm, the posts may reach less people.

## **Recommendation: Leave commenting enabled.**

Given that this is an important opportunity to communicate about the Assembly, it is recommended to proceed as usual and closely monitor the responses to determine if the approach needs to be changed.

## **Specifically, the following is recommended:**

- Proactively direct questions and comments to MASS LBP in initial posts.
- Explicitly state that City of Victoria and District of Saanich are not directly involved with the Victoria–Saanich Citizens’ Assembly.
- Provide a heads up to staff responsible for monitoring the page about the possible inflammatory nature of the issue.
- Follow internal comment moderation policy and use platform moderation tools as needed.
- Designate a senior comms staff for the social media moderator to connect with for timely advice and direction regarding any inappropriate comments or an overwhelming number of responses.
- Prepare a standardized response to ensure consistency between Victoria and Saanich accounts (see below).
- Connect Victoria and Saanich social media staff to each other so they have quick and easy access to confer on any issues that arise.

This decision may need to be revisited depending on the type of engagement the initial posts generate. If it is determined that commenting needs to be disabled in the future, it will be important to explain the reasons for this in advance of turning off the function and to offer alternative ways for the public to share their feedback.

### **Key Messages**

- The [Victoria–Saanich Citizens’ Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation](#) is a unique exercise in municipal democracy in which members will explore the costs, benefits and disadvantages of an amalgamation of the City of Victoria and District of Saanich.
- The Citizens’ Assembly was commissioned by the elected councils of both municipalities, and supported by a public referendum which took place in 2018.
- MASS LBP is running the Victoria–Saanich Citizens’ Assembly at arm’s-length from both municipalities to safeguard the independence of the process.
- All comments and questions related to the Victoria–Saanich Citizens’ Assembly should be directed to [info@victoriasaanich.ca](mailto:info@victoriasaanich.ca) or via phone at 1-833-319-1901.

## Tactics

Date	ACTIVITY	AUDIENCE	RESPONSIBLE	NOTES
Week of April 7	Update web pages	Victoria and Saanich residents	Victoria Saanich	See text below and use images provided by MASS LBP
Week of April 7	Facebook LinkedIn Twitter/X Bluesky	Victoria and Saanich residents	Victoria Saanich	See text below and use images provided by MASS LBP

**IMAGES:** [Click here to access a Google Drive with images](#)

## TEXT FOR WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

### WEEK OF APRIL 7, 2025

#### Website

<https://www.saanich.ca/EN/main/local-government/committees-boards/citizens-assembly-standing-committee.html>

<https://www.victoria.ca/city-government/boards-and-committees/citizens-assembly-council-committee>

#### April 2025 Update

The [Victoria–Saanich Citizens’ Assembly \(VSCA\) on Amalgamation](#) has concluded its deliberations and will submit its final report to councils in May 2025.

The Assembly has been tasked with exploring the costs, benefits and disadvantages of amalgamation between the two municipalities, and making recommendations to councils on whether and under what conditions amalgamation should take place, which could include suggestions related to service integration.

The Assembly is an independent process commissioned by the elected councils of Victoria and Saanich, and funded by the municipalities and the Province of British Columbia.

Over eight full-day sessions, between September 2024 and April 2025, totalling nearly 60 hours of deliberation, the Assembly members heard presentations or panel discussions from 19 guest speakers, experts, and stakeholders; considered a broad range of issues and questions about municipal and regional affairs; drafted a set of values and considerations to guide their process; received and reviewed the technical study report; and heard directly from their fellow residents through a series of public meetings and public submissions to gain further community perspectives.

All presentations and materials received by the Assembly, as well as summaries of each session, are posted on the Assembly website, [victoriasaanich.ca](https://victoriasaanich.ca).

Read about the [48 randomly selected residents of Saanich and Victoria](#) who have represented all residents of these municipalities on the Citizens' Assembly.

*MASS LBP is running the Victoria Saanich Citizens' Assembly at arms-length from both municipalities to safeguard the independence of the process. All comments and questions related to the Victoria-Saanich Citizens' Assembly should be directed to [info@victoriasaanich.ca](mailto:info@victoriasaanich.ca) or via phone at 1-833-319-1901.*

### **Twitter/X (thread)**

### **Bluesky (thread)**

The Victoria-Saanich Citizens' Assembly on Amalgamation has concluded its deliberations and will publish its final report in May 2025. The Assembly was tasked with exploring the costs, benefits and disadvantages of amalgamation between the two municipalities. #VSCA

### **[in reply to above]**

The Assembly is composed of 48 randomly selected residents of Saanich and Victoria. They met 8 times between Sept 2024 and April 2025, a total of 60 hours. All presentations and materials received by the Assembly are posted on the Assembly website [victoriasaanich.ca](https://victoriasaanich.ca)

### **Facebook**

The [Victoria–Saanich Citizens’ Assembly \(VSCA\) on Amalgamation](#) has concluded its deliberations and will submit its final report to councils in May.

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Learn more at [victoriasaanich.ca](http://victoriasaanich.ca).

#citizensassembly #victoria #saanich #VSCA

### LinkedIn

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#citizensassembly #victoria #saanich #VSCA

### STANDARD RESPONSE

<The City of Victoria/District of Saanich> is not directly involved in the Victoria–Saanich Citizens’ Assembly. MASS LBP is running the Assembly at arms–length from both municipalities to safeguard the independence of the process.

Visit [victoriasaanich.ca](http://victoriasaanich.ca) to learn more about the Assembly process and mandate, key dates and events, and how you can be involved.

All comments and questions related to the Victoria–Saanich Citizens’ Assembly should be directed to [info@victoriasaanich.ca](mailto:info@victoriasaanich.ca) or via phone at 1–833–319–1901.